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SUBJECT: POLAND BIO: MACIEJ NOWICKI, MINISTER OF ENVIRONMENT

¶1. (U) Maciej Nowicki was named Poland's Minister of Environment on November 16, 2007. He is widely considered one of Poland's most respected environmentalists. Since 1992, he has been the president of Ekofundusz, an organization he founded to provide financial support for environmental protection projects in Poland, to facilitate transfer of environmental technologies to the Polish market, and to stimulate the development of the Polish environmental protection movement. He previously served as Poland's Minister of Environment in 1991, where he was instrumental in negotiating a reduction in Poland's foreign debt with the Paris Club, with an agreement that 10% of the debt payments would be designated for environmental protection in Poland. He has served as well as vice-chairman of the United Nations Commission on Sustainable Development (1994-95) and as an advisor on environmental matters to the secretary-general of the Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development (1996-97). In 1996, Nowicki was awarded the prestigious "Deutscher Umweltpreis" for his achievements in environmental protection in Poland. He holds a doctorate in environmental engineering from Warsaw Polytechnic University.

¶2. (SBU) As head of Ekofundusz, Nowicki has presided over one of Poland's wealthiest and most powerful environmental organizations. Between 1992 and 2005, Ekofundusz awarded grants of almost PLN 1.5 billion (approximately US\$600 million) to over 1250 environmental projects. In 2006, the finances of Ekofundusz drew the attention of Pawel Szalamacha, Minister of the State Treasury, who demanded that Nowicki and the board of directors of Ekofundusz be dismissed because of financial improprieties. Szalamacha charged that five members of the Ekofundusz management were drawing salaries without performing any work, and that the organization had not filed a financial plan in two years. Szalamacha's charges were not substantiated. A number of observers felt Szalamacha's charges represented an attempt by his Law and Justice (PiS) party to place its own members in the management of Ekofundusz. Nowicki survived as head of Ekofundusz and maintained his reputation for integrity.

¶3. (U) Nowicki is married and has two daughters. His interests include art history, especially architectural, and fine music.

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